

The Outlook for the Nation

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Sooner or later, improvisation, carelessness and incompetence will have social and political costs for a country and for its people as a whole, heightening their impact with unpredictable consequences for peace and stability.

In Mexico it has become commonplace for the most needed sectors with fixed incomes to become the ones that absorb the damage and suffer the consequences of the corruption and unbridled ambition of politicians and businessmen. These men in power lack a sense of nationalism or the social vision to establish a fair and healthy political economy that would pull us out of the growing regression, marginalisation and poverty that can lead to the total collapse of a system which lasted nearly 100 years with relative stability and cost more than a million lives, just as the Mexican Revolution did.

The rich are becoming ever richer: this is because we're talking about companies and businessmen who pay very low taxes as a proportion of their wealth, who pay subsistence salaries and maintain the worst working conditions and abusive exploitation of both their workforce and the natural resources that belong to this country, i.e. to each and every Mexican, rather than a handful of people.

Weak and complicit governments, with no defined direction or heading for moving the country forward, allow themselves to bow to lobbying by the wealthiest and associates or directives from companies that are only looking out for their own interests, whose sole concern for the nation is about what it can do for their business.

Fuel price increases, council tax, vehicle ownership tax and the myriad other things that middle and low income earners have to pay are irresponsible fiscal charges that will do nothing to improve the distribution of wealth, but will instead make it ever more unequal and unfair. Instead of increasing the taxes on capital gains and those who can most afford to pay, they are given exemptions or their expected contributions are reduced out of all proportion to their worth.

The most powerful people contribute less to the costs of funding public spending; they spend their time covering up the government's inefficiencies and its tendency to make things up as it goes along. The cost of this is borne, at the end of the day, by the people. There is an entire



network of collusion and cover ups supported by a few civil servants and the companies that corrupt them, so they can jointly fleece the people.

What are the prospects for the economy given these circumstances? What is the future for those of us who among the population of more than 124 million Mexicans have no access to high level confidential information, cronies, influence peddling, limitless concessions and privileges? It feels as though their negligence is deliberately intended to provoke anger and a popular uprising. To engineer such a precarious situation is unforgivable.

When the external effects of a new US administration with different politics that have significantly heightened the sense of uncertainty are added to internal issues of insecurity, violence, corruption and incompetence, then the landscape for the year ahead looks very bleak and littered with risks for Mexico and Enrique Peña Nieto's government.

Since his campaign Donald Trump has announced decisions and changes the effects of which have already begun to be felt, such as curbing US investments to Mexico, the building of a wall, chain-link or electric fence along the entire border, as well as making fundamental changes to the NAFTA free trade agreement, which will have an impact on our nation's future.

In the case of the automotive industry, he is threatening and putting pressure onto the big American car firms like Ford, General Motors and Chrysler-Fiat along with other international companies like Toyota, Honda and German manufacturers, exhorting them to stop investing in our country. Trump wants to protect US jobs and put a stop to the advantages of using low cost Mexican labour, which our government has tolerated and promoted.

There are whispers in some political circles that while Trump is in power, no autoparts factory will relocate to Mexico, given that the US is significantly deficient in this area. This is because we export a greater volume of fully assembled cars north of the border, compared to those that we import. The president elect wants to redress the balance of the automotive industry between both countries.

The question is how Mexico's government is going to respond to all these threats and circumstances, given that internally it is also facing the turmoil of major economic and social problems with unforeseen consequences, all stemming from its unjust and misguided economic policy.

Faced with this situation, the prospects for our nation are neither gratifying nor optimistic, and less so for the great majority of the Mexican people, who continue to hope for the radical change that this government has neither sought nor been able to offer.